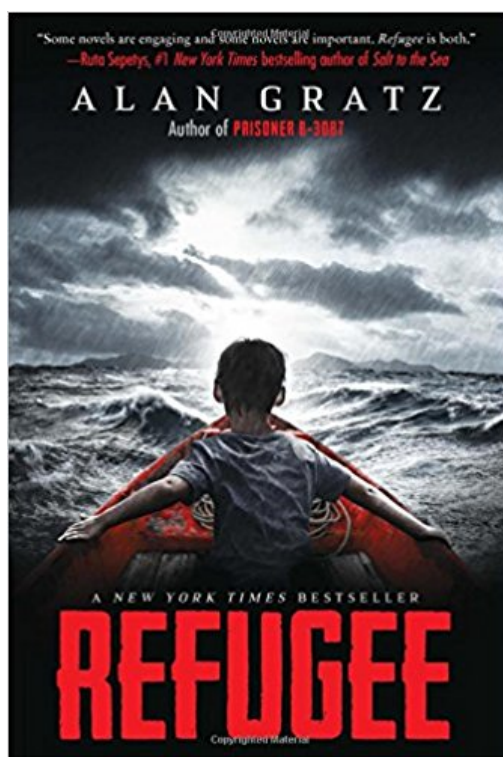


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Review of *Refugee*
By Alan Gratz

Adult/ Educator Reviewer: Ean Fulks
NYOS Charter School
Student Review: Nadeen Al Rifaei, 7th Grade



Gratz, A. (2017). *Refugee*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press.

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Adult Review: Ean Fulks

Refugee tells the three distinct stories of Josef, a Jewish boy fleeing Nazi Germany during World War II, Isabel, a young girl fleeing communist Cuba led by military dictator Fidel Castro in the 1990s, and Mahmoud, fleeing his home in

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war-torn Syria in 2015. Each story follows its own plot line, but Gratz weaves them together beautifully to show the ways in which people impact one another and the ways in which human beings are connected. Each young person faces tragedy and hardship on their journey, learning lessons as they push toward safety and freedom.

As a seventh grade teacher, I am always looking for books for my students that are both engaging and that tell the stories of diverse characters. Reading stories is one of the ways we develop empathy and a drive to change our world for the better. *Refugee* is one of those books that keeps the reader on the edge of their seat with its engaging plot and cliffhangers, while also telling the stories of characters the reader can’t help but feel like they know and love. For these reasons, *Refugee* is a book that will appeal to upper elementary and middle grades students as well as young adults and adults. I believe it is our duty as educators to help students find books they love and develop their reading lives. I

also believe it is our duty to bring stories to our students that help them see the world through others’ eyes.

Josef, Isabel and Mahmoud’s stories will draw readers in. Even if the reader has never been in their exact situations, their love for their families and friends, their desire for freedom and safety, and the ways in which they cling to hope in the midst of chaos and tragedy are all aspects of their lives that readers will be able to make connections with. Students should know that there are moments of great tragedy and despair in *Refugee* (there were a number of times when I held the book in front of me with tears in my eyes), but that there are also beautiful, life-affirming moments that stir the heart and make a more just world feel possible again. *Refugee* is one of those great books that can incite deep, meaningful conversations about our shared humanity, regardless of any difference and help us see that we are all more alike than unlike. It is books like *Refugee* that help us see the world through others’ eyes and that will ultimately help us to push forward toward kindness and justice and help us to create a better world.

Student Review: Nadeen Al Rifaei

The book *Refugee* by Alan Gratz is important because it talks about people around the world who have terrible problems and have to leave their homes because of war. Knowing about people’s problems is really important because we can see things happen that most likely have not happened to us. I think the author’s message is that the world has many terrible things and that we should help people. Another one of

the author's messages is that we should help the world be a better place.

I can relate to Mahmoud. He left his home in Syria because of war. The way I'm similar to Mahmoud is that I left my home in Iraq because of war as well. When I moved, I went to Jordan and I stayed there for two and a half years. The next time I moved, I came to the United States. The reason I left Jordan was because many people were racist and sexist towards us and because I had a health problem that could only be solved in the United States. I'm fine now because I have been treated, and I have been in the United States for five years. I'm really happy.

"Refugee doesn't let you stop reading because it is too good to stop."

One of my favorite parts in the books is when CNN news comes up to Isabel as her family is getting ready to leave Cuba. It's interesting because Isabel and her family are trying to run away from Cuba, and a newscaster tries to find out why they were running away and how they were going to do it. The thing that I love most about this book is that there are good moments even in bad situations. What I don't like about this book is that there are really bad moments that happen in the characters' lives. *Refugee* doesn't let you stop reading because it is too good to stop. I would recommend this book to people who like adventures, a lot of plots, and learning about other people in the world. So if you want to know more about this book and want to be excited about something then read *Refugee*.